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Abstract: This article offers a critical guide to the controversial issues pertaining to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance. The article discusses criteria in understanding the issue, such as distinguishing between fact and opinion and recognizing point and counterpoint arguments. Also presented are exercises that help the reader further analyze the issue, such as a debate or a critical essay, for the purpose of developing and effectively arguing a personal perspective.

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Pledge of Allegiance: Guide to Critical Analysis

This guide is intended to help you evaluate the controversial topics provided in EBSCO Publishing's Points of View Reference Center™. Using this analysis will enhance your ability to read critically, develop your own perspective on the issue of the Pledge of Allegiance, and write or debate an effective argument on the topic.

Before You Read

- In a single sentence, state what you currently think is the controversy surrounding the Pledge of Allegiance.
- On the opening screen, Browse by Category, click on "Civics & Government," and then click on "Pledge of Allegiance."
- View the Result List of four records on the Points of View tab that includes this guide.

Each topic in Points of View Reference Center™ has three main Points of View essays. While there may be many opinions on the issue, these essays are designed to provide a base from which you may engage in further analysis:

- The Overview provides general background information on the issue.
- The Point essay presents one opinion on the issue in a persuasive position essay.
- The Counterpoint essay offers an alternative or opposite view of the issue.

As You Read

Reading all three essays will enable you to better understand the controversy, providing a foundation from which you can broaden your knowledge of the topic.

- **Read** the Overview, Point and Counterpoint essays. You will be able to move between the Overview, the Point and the Counterpoint essays by clicking on the colored rectangles in the sidebar featuring the Points of View icon.
- **Take notes** on the main ideas. Start by printing out the essay and highlighting the main ideas and circling key words.

- **Review the terms** in the Understanding the Discussion section of the Overview.
- **Organize your ideas.** Click on article "Organize Your Ideas Visually" on the sidebar. Use one of the graphic organizer templates provided to break the essay down into its main points.

Judge Fact and Opinion

Click on the sidebar article titled "Judge Fact vs. Opinion" and review.

FACTS

- Facts are statements that can be proved true or false.
- Facts tell what actually happened.
- Facts tell what is happening now.
- Facts state something that can be easily observed or verified.

OPINIONS

- Opinions are statements that cannot be proved true or false because they express a person's thoughts, beliefs, feelings or estimates.
- Opinions express worth or value.
- Opinions tell what should or should not be thought or done.
- Opinions are based on what seems true or probable.

Note the difference between the following facts and opinions:

Example 1:

Fact: The phrase "under God" was inserted into the pledge during the Cold War in 1954.

Opinion: Adding "under God" to the pledge was an overreaction to the perceived threat of the Soviet Union's ideology of "godless communism" and should be recognized as one of many lapses of reason that were common at the time.

- In this example of an opinion, the phrase "should be recognized as" indicates an assertion of what should be thought. In addition, "overreaction" and "lapses of reason" are value judgments that cannot be proved.

Example 2:

Fact: The Establishment Clause of the Constitution prohibits the adoption of a national religion.

Opinion: The Founding Fathers guaranteed freedom of faith not freedom from contact with faith.

- In this example, the opinion is a personal interpretation of the intent of the Founding Fathers.

Example 3:

Fact: In 2005, a bill was introduced into the Senate that would prevent federal courts from ruling in cases challenging the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opinion: Passage of the bill, if held up as constitutional, would place our religious freedoms in the hands of the states.

- In this example, the opinion makes a possible, but not provable, prediction.

Example 4:

Fact: Upon insertion of "under God" into the pledge, President Eisenhower stated: "From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty."

Opinion: The war on terror serves as a daily reminder of the importance of the healing power of faith.

- In this example of an opinion, the idea of "the healing power of faith" is based on a personally held belief and cannot be proved.

Based on the criteria listed above, select:

- Three fact statements from the Point essay on the Pledge of Allegiance
- Three opinion statements from the Counterpoint essay on the Pledge of Allegiance

LOOKING DEEPER INTO THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

You will see several links in the Related Items box on the right hand side of the screen. Exploring these added features will enhance your understanding of the topic you're studying.

- Click on one of the photos in the Related Items and record your reaction to the picture you chose. Did viewing this picture change your current view on the Pledge of Allegiance? How?
- Under the What the Experts Say tab, click on the link and read the article provided. Is the author of this article promoting the same argument put forth in the Point or the Counterpoint essay? If the writer is supporting a new viewpoint on the topic, what is it?
- The Result List also offers many other kinds of research articles, such as Periodicals, Newspapers, Reference Books, etc. Click on one of these tabs and read one of the articles. What source tab did you use and what is one benefit of using this type of source? What is one drawback? What new information did you learn from reading this article?

YOU DECIDE

Based on the readings and review of the Related Items offered, consider the Point and Counterpoint essays in light of your own set of personal values.

- Reflect on which arguments about the Pledge of Allegiance you accept: Point, Counterpoint, or a completely different argument. For you, what is the single most compelling argument regarding the Pledge of Allegiance, and why?

Write an 800-1,000-word essay response to the above question that contains a thesis statement and 2-3 supporting arguments. See "Writing a Thesis Statement" and "Writing a Persuasive Essay" on the sidebar for tips on how to write your essay.

- Use facts from other resources found in Points of View Reference Center, other than the Overview, Point, and Counterpoint essays. See "Judge Fact vs. Opinion" on the sidebar to help determine the value of the information you find.
- Investigate some of the sources cited in the Bibliography at the end of each Point of View essay to see what kind of sources those authors consulted.
- For website information, first review the article titled "Evaluate a Website" on the sidebar. Use the information you find there to guide your decisions on which site's information would add value to your essay.
- Suggest ways in which the controversy surrounding the Pledge of Allegiance could be resolved.

See these other Points of View "How To" topics for additional help. They can be found on the sidebar of each essay.

- Writing a Topic Sentence
- Taking Good Notes
- From Notes to Outline
- Visual Ways to Organize Your Ideas

- Writing a Conclusion
- Citing Sources
- Creating a Bibliography
- Writing a Research Paper

DEBATE IT

- Debate the issue. To create an effective debate, refer to the tips offered in the "Debate Strategies," "Give an Oral Presentation," and "Start a Debate Club" articles in the sidebar.
- Have someone else read either the Point or the Counterpoint essay on the Pledge of Allegiance. Imagine you are facing this person in a debate setting. Take notes on the points (contentions) you would make to oppose the arguments (rebuttals).
- When the speaker is finished, respond to the arguments presented with opposing arguments, pointing out any contradictions you may have heard.

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